MR. TUBBY: I want to remind you that the President is appearing here and will speak on an off-the-record basis. The Secret Service informs me that if any of you have cameras with you you may take shots, but we don't want shots from your seats at the start of the conference.

PRESIDENT KENNEDY: Mr. Secretary; ladies and gentlemen; II am delighted that you have come to Washington, and I hope that your talks with members of the Government have been beneficial.

I do not have a speech. I will be glad to answer a few questions. That, perhaps, is the best way of bringing out those matters which are of interest to you.

Let me say, very briefly, that I think we move and live in an extremely perilous time.

I commented on Thursday, rather briefly, about the kinds of challenges which we face, the maldistribution of wealth in many countries of the world, the fact that so many millions, hundreds of millions of people in the southern half of the globe, live on the marginal edge of existence with a strong sense of ancient wrongs and grievances, which are exploited by our adversaries in each of these countries.

People who desire an improvement in their life

are presented with the example of the Soviet Union--having come in the short time of 40 years from being a backward country of Europe into being first in space. The Soviet Union, and the Chinese example, of being able to mobilize all of the resources of the state for the service of the state; being able to mobilize all of their resources to permit an economic breakthrough--that, obviously, has great attractions to people who live on incomes of $50, $60, or $70 a year.

And when the Communists are successful, as they are in a case like Cuba, they then use all of the resources of the police state in order to eliminate resistance. Many are shot, others become refugees who might oppose; and then the apparatus is able to maintain itself under control.

In a sense, the Communists have to win only one election, and when people maybe get tired of the results and become disappointed that the Communists are able not to fulfill their promises, by then the police apparatus has gone to work with control of communications and all the rest, and they are able to maintain their power.

I would think that the United States and the Free World is, therefore, in for an extremely difficult decade.

Many of the countries of South America face

extremely sharp social tensions within their borders. The Communists are extremely active, well-disciplined minorities. I do not accept the view that this is the wave of history, but they are able to exploit the social structure of those countries in order to seize control. The most obvious example, of course, is the case of Vietnam, where with only 15,000 guerrillas, or perhaps less, there is somewhat of a prospect that they may seize control of that country before many months are out; killing, as they have, 2,000 civil officers a year, and 2,000 police a year; attempting to win control by assassination, even though the President has been re-elected by a generous margin. So I think that we are in for a serious struggle.

In addition, of course, the Soviet Union and the United States are rather in balance as far as nuclear weapons goes, both having the ability to destroy each other; and, therefore, there is a reluctance on both sides to use those weapons. But, in conventional forces, the Soviet Union operating from a narrow base, the hub of the wheel, and the Communist Chinese in Asia outnumber us. They are able to bring far more troops to bear in the Middle East (the Russians are) than we are; and in Western Europe, with a long line of communication, far more troops than we can bring to bear; in Asia, through the

Communist Chinese, they have them by the hundreds of thousands, and they can bring far more to bear than we can. And, therefore, with only the United States really in a position to move troops from one area to another, they have many advantages. And seconding the conventional force, of course, is their effective use of guerrillas. They are able to operate anonymously. Everything we do is printed in the paper; and they are carrying on their struggles with all of the advantage of secrecy.

I do not accept the view that there is a slow inevitability about the defeat of the West. I hold a different view. But I do not think I exaggerate when I say that we are going to be in for extremely difficult times which will test our nerve and will, because I think the Soviet Union will face us with the challenges in the most abrupt ways in the coming months: Berlin, Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, as they begin to continue to try to move the balance of power in their direction.

So that I am glad that you are here, because I feel that, being here, you can at least share some of the problems that we face, and with which we must deal in the coming months.

I will be delighted to answer any questions.

Q Mr. President, one of the things we have been told here is that as result of the events in Cuba has been to reveal to many other Latin American countries, governments, and peoples, Castro as a Communist stooge; and, therefore, to consolidate Latin American association with the United States.

Would you comment on that view?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that it is becoming--that many more people in Latin America are becoming more and more aware of the fact that the Cuban revolution is not an endemic one, or, if it was, that it has been taken over and is part now of the Soviet apparatus. Castro still has, of course, strong areas of support in many of the countries of Latin America. And I think it would be premature to make a judgment as to whether the awareness of the fact that Castro has betrayed the revolution--whether that awareness is moving faster than his popularity because of his association with the overthrow of existing social orders, which, in many cases, in Latin American are unpopular.

So that I think only time will tell which will win that race. But I would say that Castro as part of the Soviet apparatus--that that recognition is

becoming greater. Many leaders of Latin America tell us that, but they are reluctant to say it publicly because of the support that Castro has in their own country.

ELK

[Continued on page F-7]

Q Mr. President, how badly damaged do you think United States prestige abroad has been, as a result of our involvement in the abortive Cuban invasion attempt, and what can we do to restore it to its previous state?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think the prestige of the United States has been hurt because a failure hurts. As to what we can do to restore it, that's a matter which we are now considering. But I think that we are going to have to recognize that in these next years there are going to be many setbacks, and I hope many successes.

But in this struggle, which, after all, we are seeing a similar kind of struggle being carried on by the communists in Viet Nam--but that kind of support of guerrillas is not regarded--which is far more brutal, and directed as I have said to eliminating important groups within the society--that does not seem to be regarded very critically in the United Nations and elsewhere. But we will have to--I think our prestige, our survival are all at stake, and will be for the next ten years.

I know of no sure formula for success. All we can attempt to do is try to secure the best judgments

of the people who have had the most experience, and try, and if we fail, then we are going to try again.

Q Mr. President--

THE PRESIDENT: Perhaps in a different way, however, next time.

Q Mr. President, the argument has been made that the very strength of the reporting on the preparations for the Cuban invasion indicated how much leakage and how much faction-ridden this operation was, and it should have been a warning that it was an ill-founded one.

On the other hand, the argument was made that the press did a disservice by the extent of its reporting. Have you given any thought to what is the role of the press in covering para-military warfare?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I hope the press will consider it. It's very difficult for a public official to discuss this matter, because it is a sensitive matter.

The press is rightfully concerned with any efforts to limit its reporting of events. The press, however, is a Fourth Estate, and therefore in a sense has important public responsibilities. It seems to me that it's a matter which the press should consider.

I think, if you go over the reports which have been made in recent weeks--many of them

inaccurate--many of the reports coming out of Miami were inaccurate. Others were accurate, coming out of different areas, and which were extremely damaging to us.

If we were attempting to carry on any other operations in this or other areas, the next day, or even once we made a decision, undoubtedly it would be printed in the paper. And any preparations which were made would be printed in the paper.

One paper did carry a very carefully-detailed analysis of the business about the defecting pilots, as to how the story couldn't possibly be true, one, two, three, four, at a time when we were under attack at the United Nations.

Now, this is a matter that you gentlemen have to decide in this kind of a cold war, what you should print and what you should not print.

I, of course, have thoughts about it. But I must say it seems to me that this is an area where you ought to make your judgments, and perhaps consider it almost as a profession, not merely individually. Because we are going to have, I hope, not a similar situation, but other situations which will require us to complete any preparations we make, and before we carry them on, and you reporters can always

determine what is going on here.

Q Mr. President, if you had the Cuban decision to make over again, what would you have done differently? [Laughter]

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we hope that by the time General Taylor can conclude his analysis--I will say that, speaking here privately, many meetings were held on this matter.

Many people's--whose experience had carried them through many years--judgments were reached, in both military and in other branches of the Government. And this was not--when the decision was made, those who were most involved thought that this effort would be worthwhile, on the assumption that if it did not succeed there, that they could carry on as guerrillas.

But it failed. So quite obviously, with the advantage of hindsight, a good many different decisions would have been made. But I must say that a good many able people, with long military experience and all the rest, looked at this, and were wrong.

Q Mr. President, does the Administration still have under consideration an embargo on the sixty or seventy million dollars a year of imports from Cuba?

THE PRESIDENT: That's correct. But you have to realize that this is not going to make much difference. He can get along without that. It's sort of a gesture, and may be useful, worth doing. But it doesn't do the job, by any sense.

Q Mr. President, do you feel you have gained popular support for your foreign policy through your recent talks with Nixon, Rockefeller, and Eisenhower?

THE PRESIDENT: No. But I think they are entitled, as leaders of the--and as people who have strong support in the country, that they are entitled to be informed about events. And in addition it seems to me useful for me to get their views on what future action should be taken. And I have been doing that.

Q Mr. President, you said earlier that Viet-Nam is in danger and the Communists may win there in a few months.

A Well, the argument has been made they may. We don't know what is going to happen in Viet-Nam.

Q Don't you think it is inevitable?

A No, I don't. But I certainly say that Viet-Nam is under very hard attack. If you look at a map of Viet-Nam under what areas the Communists control at night, the map is, there's a lot of red on it. So that I would say that that is a crucial area right now and these Communists supply from across the northern border under the direction of the Communists, are carrying out a very sharp and continual attack upon Viet-Nam and on the structural government. So I think it's a very critical area.

Q But not an effort we lost?

A No, I didn't suggest that. I think it's going to be a tough fight though in Viet-Nam.

Q Mr. President, do you have any information on who is training the Castro malitia? Are there Soviet military experts there working with them, or guiding them on policy?

A Well, there is--I think it would be too, our information is harder. I think it would be better to pass it, the question. We are not making any assumptions any more. [Laughter] [Applause]

Q Mr. President, while Mr. Stevenson spoke here, he expressed the fear that in reference to American dollars being used overseas, that the use of corporate and private dollars investments overseas might be interpreted as a new form of colonialism. Is this a policy of your Administration?

A No. We are attempting in some areas to encourage private investments by giving reinsurance guarantees and all the rest. For example, on the development of the Volta, we are attempting to persuade private companies to come in and giving them some assurances that their risks will be at least borne in part by us.

So I would say that we wish to encourage investment. And I do think that, of course, those who invest in those countries must recognize that they are always going to be subject to the charge of exploitation and, therefore, they should take very effort that they can by permitting local participation, local employees holding high and responsible positions, making sure that the pay is better than it may be in other sections, making sure that they don't dominate a particular industry which would be regarded as essential to the national security because whatever investment we carry in the mood that these countries are now in, where they have thrown off political domination from abroad, many of them are Marxists and regard economic exploitation as the modern form of colonialism,

and therefore we have to constantly be on the alert against that charge, and the companies involved must be.

But I would like to see as within the limitations that I have described, I would hope that we would get more private investment particularly in the underdeveloped world and not merely in the extracted industries--oil, and so on.

Q We are always hearing, Mr. President, that we shall meet our bigger threats and tests in the next few years. Now, this implies that if we survive these tests and threats the threats will lessen. What is the basis for this assumption, and what is the long-range expectation along those lines of the Administration?

A Well, it is felt that this is a particularly critical time because these countries are going through a period of transition, particularly in Africa, from a colonial status into an independent status and therefore they now are attempting to make that adjustment. If they are able to make that adjustment and begin to build a stronger social structure within their country, if they begin to develop economic plans which offer them some hope of a gradually increasing standard of living over a period of years, they may be able to move through this particular period.

It may be unfair, I suppose it's just a tendency to think of the next few years. I think we are going to find ourselves confronted with great difficulties when the

Chinese Communists secure the atomic weapons and, operating behind that cover, attempt to use the power of their conventional forces.

So that I would say the whole decade is critical and that is about as far as we can now look. But at least the plus side is the fact that these countries--India, Pakistan, and others--have laid out economic plans which do give some hope that at the end of them they will have made a breakthrough and they will begin gradually building sufficient capital to permit them, even in spite of their population increases, to provide for a better standard of living for their people. But I think probably we would be safe to say that even when that time comes other hazards will be upon us and as long as this struggle goes on between these powerful systems, the Communists and ours, I would say that life would be hazardous.

Q Mr. President?

A Yes?

Q Sir, from what you said about our being so badly out-numbered in Asia and from your reference to use of. I think you meant, the Monroe Doctrine before the editors, should we look forward to a return to a sphere of influence and a sphere of interests defense rather than world-wide?

A No, I would not be prepared to accept that. I think that we can give guarantees to countries which can

be maintained against external attack of the movement of foreign troops in the traditional sense across a frontier. That we can help them. We can, of course, deadlock the Communists' atomic power. But it's pretty hard to protect a country against the internal insurrections and guerrilla warfare and all the rest.

We can give them supplies. We can give them economic aid and all the rest, but in the final analysis they have to do that job. We cannot hold a country against internal attack, which is the kind of attack as the Communists--Khrushchev made it very clear in his speech in January--the war of the liberation and all the rest, that they are going to mount against us, feeling that when we then intervene they will threaten us with an atomic war or will attack another country with conventional forces.

So that the problem is how do you hold these countries, not against external attack which I think we can meet our commitments to do, but internal. I think that is the problem. We see it in Laos. We see it in Viet-Nam. We are going to see it in other areas.

We can protect. I doubt if the Russians or the Chinese would move their troops formally across the frontier unless it was in reprisal to some action that we took. I think the threat of war with the United States is sufficient to prevent that. But inside the country in the final analysis we can help, but the people themselves have to win

that fight. And it's extremely difficult for a society in those countries which is not organized and not subject to the discipline which the Communists are, to win that fight. But that is the kind of fight we are going to have, and we are going to have it in this Hemisphere too.

Q Mr. President, I have a question about the space program. Yesterday we were told that we might have some equality with the Russians in 1967 to 1970 if we are willing to go all out in our financial support. Now, it seemed to me that we were told that this had to come from the people. Now, I come from the Mid-West and in my part of the country the people are very alarmed about Russia's advantage in the space program. Is there a tendency to wait for the people to come and say that we want to spend more money, or are there plans to go ahead with it as fast as possible no matter what the cost? And also to what extent is our military standing affected by the success of the space program?

VRV

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think I agree, and in a question as sophisticated as this one is the direction should come from here, not from the people. We should attempt to suggest what we think ought to be done, and the people can accept it or not. I will say it is an extremely difficult decision, as I am sure you have been informed, as we are talking about billions of dollars, and where there is no assurances that even if we put the billions of dollars in that we can be successful, at least in the sense of being first. We are behind in boosters by quite a lot. They obviously are not going to give away that advantage, and they are going to use the concentrated resources of their state to stay ahead.

So when we talk, we are talking about putting a man in the moon and bringing him back, we are talking, as you have been informed, about a program between 20 or 30 billion dollars with no assurances that '69 or '70, or when it comes about, that we will be the first. We may be second by a week or a month, and we would have spent this tremendous sum of money and committed it to a program which does not have immediate military significance, which does not effect--it has a military significance, but being--it may not have the most extreme military significance. There may be other things that you would want to do militarily which do not

involve a trip to the moon and back. Though I think that the whole question of space, we don't know what it is going to mean militarily. It is like the old quotation, "What good is a baby?" The question is, "What is the baby going to become?" And it is true about space. We don't know.what it is going to be. It may be a decisive military aid. In any case we are talking about committing between 20 and 40 billion dollars to bring a man to the moon and back but with no assurances that we will be first. We are talking about another many billions of dollars and the way of putting a laboratory around the earth with two or three men,, or to send a probe to the moon, around the moon and back, which could be done in a shorter time, but we are talking about a tremendous sum of money, and I do--the Vice President, who is Chairman of the Space Council now is conducting a study of this and is going to make recommendations, I would hope, in the next two or three weeks, which will then be the basis for a report to the Congress as to where we stand and what our alternatives are, and what our prospects are for success. But there as yet we have not been informed by any scientist that we are sure of being successful. But it may still be worth taking the risk, but it is a tremendous sum of money, and the Middle West and the rest of the country

have to realize that we are talking about billions. When we are talking about putting four million dollars into desalinization and we are talking about other programs, oceanography and all the rest, we are talking now about the billions and billions of dollars, as I say, up to 40 billions, and that is a tremendous sum.

Q Mr. President, we have heard in the past two days a considerable explanation of the bad position that we face and the problems that we face. You have of course capped it with your own discussion. Is there any area that you see where at the present time, of dealing with Khrushchev and the rest of the Communist world, where we have some advantages and something constructive and hopeful to look forward to in terms of the Western world?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think we have many advantages. I think the potential of Western Europe is an extremely important one, After all, there are more people than there are in the Soviet Union, a greater productive capacity, and while there are serious problems in Western Europe, nevertheless that does offer a great hope for more intimate association between Western Europe and the United States.

The Communists have not taken control of any country in the Hemisphere and there are powerful groups

opposed to the Communists, and Japan has moved ahead and in a far more prosperous way than we imagined some years ago. I do have great hopes that in spite of the problems that they face, India which contains within its borders 35 to 40 per cent of all the peoples of the underdeveloped world, that they would be able in a third five-year plan to move ahead. I think it is clear that there is hope that they will continue to maintain their opposition to Communist advance within their own country.

So I would say that we have got tremendous disadvantages in this struggle, when you look at Africa, and the history of Africa, and the illiteracy, and the fact that they have been exploited, they feel, by the West, and they have suddenly become independent, and yet at the present time not one of them have as yet become, even though Mali and Guinea have become critical areas, at least they are still not Communist, nor any of the countries of Latin America, nor any of the countries of Western Europe.

There are also strong pressures within the Communist system itself, between Russia and China, and between the satellite countries and the Soviet Union.

So I just--I am conscious of our problems, but I think we sometimes ignore the fact that people really

desire to be their own masters, that nations desire to be their own masters. I would say even in Guinea, which is probably the closest to the Communist orbit of any, that Sekou Touré does not desire to be a Communist puppet. He feels that he can develop his country. He is a Marxist. But there is a strong national feeling. Even the relations between China and Russia show it. So that all that serves, because these people's desire to be independent serves us. I think--I am conscious of our problems, but I think it is appropriate to point out that we have opportunities too.

Q Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

Q In view of the situation in Berlin, maybe--are we possibly misjudging our comparative strengths, ours and the Russians, by the fact that Khrushchev seems to be dodging that situation? That is the one place where we are absolutely committed. Would you comment on that please?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think that there is some chance that we are going to have an encounter about Berlin, and there is no indication that he is going to postpone it indefinitely. His letter to Adenauer in February indicated his desire to come back to the question

of Berlin. I have no doubt that that is going to be brought to our attention very prominently in a couple of months, and it is an area where of course we have strategic problems, but it is an area where we are clearly committed. So I would say that I think that is going to be a test of our nerves today. I don't think it is fair to say he is dodging it. I think he h is heading toward it.

Q Mr. President, we seem to have heard nothing but sad news the last few days. I wondered-- I am from Kentudky--if you would care to comment on the Kentucky Derby next month?

[laughter]

THE PRESIDENT: That is going to be sad for everybody who loses, too. [Laughter] But there are more losers than winners. Now, on the other hand, the news from Algeria this afternoon is encouraging. So I don't want you to come down here and get put through the wringer and feel that everybody in Washington is-- I just think that these problems require the best judgment of all of us, and I suppose, to know where we are going we must know where we have been, and I think that there is a good deal of soul searching now going on in this Administration, which I think is a good thing.

Q Mr. President, has there ever been any consideration given to the establishment of a police force under the Organization of the American States to meet this problem in Latin America?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, and it is one of the matters that we have been considering now. In the past however there has not been sufficient commitment to it by any. This and other proposals are now being considered now. Perhaps we can have one more, and then I shall go.

Q Mr. President, in the earlier considerations in this conference, the failure of the Cuban operation or the failure of the intelligence, both militarily and in terms of Castro's, the man who makes the intelligence denies this and in his backgrounder/implies it was more a question of the failure of military tactics. I wonder if you can give us your ideas on this.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think it is most unwise to make any judgments about it now, and that is the reason that General Taylor, one of the reasons why General Taylor is pursuing this entire matter, not to attempt to find out who is wrong, because a good many people were wrong, but to find out how they could have been wrong and what we can do in the future to improve any relationship between intelligence and military

operations and decisions. So Im not familiar with what was said, but I would reserve judgment on the question of failures, because I think that we are going to know a good deal more about it. I have my own opinion, but I don't think that there is any use in saying what was wrong was the military or what was wrong was the intelligence. I think that maybe everybody has a piece of this. [laughter]

Q Mr. President, now that you have been in office for three months, how do you like it?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I liked it better up to about nine days ago.

[Laughter; applause]

MR. TUBBY: This is off the record, what the President said. At the beginning I said that and I want to reiterate everything that he said now was off the record.

[Whereupon, at 5:31, the meeting was concluded.]